



SUCCESS STORY

A hot option for Bolivian farmers

Through the Red Chili Pepper Program, USAID is helping to improve the life of rural people



A Bolivian farmer shows a sample of his hot chili pepper lot which was sold in the Padilla business table.

A successful cooperation program in the poorest regions of Bolivia allows the people to revalue their agricultural products, revitalize their local economy and have an opportunity to grow.

PADILLA, BOLIVIA.— On Friday, July 8, the residents of Padilla, a remote municipality in southern rural Bolivia, began their day a little spicier than usual. It was the first of a two-day celebration and the start of their Fourth Annual International Red Chili Pepper Festival. The event gathered local producers and their families, owners of trade firms, and entrepreneurs from neighboring Argentina and Peru. The result was many business deals and new markets for one hundred tons of Bolivian red chili pepper.

The Festival is the public face of a joint development program implemented by the Government of Bolivia and USAID. The *Market Access and Poverty Alleviation Project (MAPA)* supports the improvement of production processes and trade opportunities for Bolivian non-traditional agricultural products.

Red chili pepper is produced in the valleys region utilizing traditional farming practices. Thanks to technical assistance and training provided by the project, seventy-five percent of the harvest, previously lost due to inadequate handling, excessive use of chemical fertilizers, and poor marketing skills, is now available for local and export markets, with resulting additional income for the producers.

Padilla is located in one of the most impoverished regions of Bolivia with scarce natural and human resources and low social and economic conditions. Red chili peppers from this region are prized for their flavor and, more recently, for their quality. With MAPA assistance, it has recently become an increasingly valuable local resource that can change the lives of many farmers and their families and boost local economic development, as well. In addition, dwellers of Padilla have found that chili pepper production may bring other benefits to their town, such as in tourism and related services for those attending the festival. In this way, Padilla's red chili pepper is bringing new energy and opportunities for local residents and businesses. With continued USAID and the Government of Bolivia's support to develop Padilla's local infrastructure through the MAPA Project, it is expected that more programs, similar to the red chili pepper one, will be identified as means to generate more jobs and income for many more poor farmers throughout Bolivia.